POPE'S ART IN *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

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POPE'S ART IN THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

For more than two centuries Alexander Pope's The Rape of The Lock has held an enviable position in the history of eighteenth-century English poetry. Written in an age that had a taste for parody, burlesque, and satire, it was upon its first publication in Lintot's Miscellany in 1712, accorded an enthusiastic reception,[1] which George Sherburn summarizes as follows:

> Addison in Spectator, No. 523, commended it, and privately called it 'merum sal.' Sir William Trumbull wrote in his letters that it was something which "all men of good taste, notwithstanding the jarring of parties, must and do universally applaud." Even the Reverend George Berkeley, future bishop and philosopher, (who had commended, to Percival, Pope's wit 'and learning'), wrote the poet: "I am charmed with the magic of your invention, with all those images, illusions, and inexplicable beauties which you raise so surprisingly, and at the same time so naturally out of a trifle." Without doubt the poem scored an enormous success.[2]

As late as 1880, Leslie Stephen, who otherwise has criticised Pope rather harshly from time to time, admits that

> No more brilliant, sparkling, vivacious trifle is to be found in our literature than the Rape of The Lock, even in this early form.[3]

Pope, for some reason, was not quite satisfied with this

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[1]The first edition was cast in two cantos, containing together three hundred thirty-four verses.

[2]George Sherburn, The Best of Pope (N.Y., Thomas Nelson & Son, 1931), p. 397.

[3]Alexander Pope (New York, Harper & Bros., 1901), p. 39.

first edition. Courthope is inclined to think that it did not, after all, arouse the attention it deserved. Whether Pope was of this opinion is not known. Sherburn seems to think that Pope's dissatisfaction with the poem was from an entirely different source:

> Few poets would have trifled with this success, and perhaps Pope would not have done so had the poem been altogether pleasing to the persons involved in it. Sir George Brown ("Sir Plume") was naturally offended, and it may be that Miss Fermor anticipated the ill-nature of Gildon and Dennis by perceiving the facts that Belinda's beauty was largely artificial, that her Othello-like roarings at the loss of the lock lacked due restraint, and that on occasion she was made to "talk bawdy."[1]

Courthope lends support to this opinion when he says:

> In spite of Pope's own statement to Spence, it does not appear that the Rape of the Lock quite answered Caryll's hopes as an instrument of reconciliation. "Sir Plume", writes Pope to his friend on November 8, 1712, "blusters, I hear; nay, the celebrated lady herself is offended, and, which is stranger, not at herself, but me. Is not this enough to make a writer never be tender of another's character or fame?" Probably if the 'celebrated lady' had been left to herself, she would have read the poem without offence, but the keen eye of scandal detected one or two passages with a double meaning, which passed the bounds of common decency, and candid friends no doubt told Belinda what was being said. Under these circumstances she was not unnaturally offended.[2]

At any rate Pope exercised great care to avoid the possibility of offending when the recast the poem; and, therefore, must have been somewhat troubled because of his having done so in the first edition. In dedicating the second edi-

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[1]Sherburn, op. cit., p. 397.

[2]William J. Courthope, The Life of Alexander Pope (London, John Murray, 1889), p. 95.

tion to Miss Fermor he is cautious enough to write:

> As to the following Canto's (sic), all the passages of them are as fabulous as the Vision at the beginning, or the Transformation at the end; (except the loss of your hair, which I always mention with reverence). The Human persons are as fictitious as the airy ones; and the character of Belinda resembles you in nothing but in Beauty.[1]

Even the motto was altered in order to dissociate Miss Fermor's identity with Belinda. In the first edition the motto was:

> Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos;
> Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis.[2]

In the second:

> "A tonso est hoc nomen adepta capillo."[3]

The plan for recasting the poem may have been unintentionally suggested by Addison, who, when the first edition appeared in Lintot's Miscellany, praised the genius of Pope very highly in the Spectator, and then went on to say:

> In Mock-Heroic Poems, the Use of the Heathen Mythology is not only excusable but graceful, because it is the Design of such Compositions to divert by adapting the fabulous Machines of the Ancients to low Subjects, and at the same time by ridiculing such kinds of Machinery in Modern Writers.[4]

Since it is quite probable that Pope read this article, one cannot help wondering just how much it influenced him. Did it suggest the germ of the plan for recasting the poem?

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[1] Courthope, op. cit., p. 76.

[2] Sherburn, op. cit., p. 75.

[3] Courthope, op. cit., p. 95.

[4] Spectator No. 523 (October 30, 1712).

Did Addison's little commentary point to possibilities that Pope had overlooked? Perhaps we shall never know, but it is highly significant that when Pope was contemplating a revision, it was to Addison he went for advice. Whatever Pope may have expected, Addison advised against revising the poem on the grounds that it was already an excellent piece of work, and that to alter it would be too great a risk.[1]

Heedless of this advice, however, Pope went ahead with his plans, and two years later (1714) the revised edition made its appearance. It had been expanded into five cantos, and contained a total of seven hundred ninety-four lines. The sylphs had been added, together with the description of Belinda's toilet, the voyage down the Thames to Hampton Court, the game of ombre, and the history of the bodkin. Only Clarissa's speech, which was not added until 1717, was lacking.[2]

When this edition was published, the enthusiasm with which it was received gave assurance that the plan of revision had been a happy one. Three thousand copies were sold in four days, and three editions were published within the year.

In 1717 Thomas Parnell expressed his appreciation of the new edition in the following vein:

> Now flames the glories of Belinda's hair,
> Made by the Muse the envy of the fair!

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[1]Leslie Stephen, op. cit., p. 39.

[2]Sherburn, op. cit., p. 397.

Less shone the tresses Egypt's princess wore,
Which sweet Callimachus so sung before.
Here courtly trifles set the world at odds,
Belles war with beaux, and whims descend for gods.
The new machines, in names of ridicule,
Mock the grave phrenzy of the chemic fool:
But know, ye fair, a point concealed with art,
The sylphs and gnomes are but a woman's heart.
The graces stand in sight; a Satyr train
Peeps o'er their head and laughs behind the scene.[1]

In 1753 Theophilus Cibber said:

> The grand characteristic of a poet is his invention, the surest distinction of a great genius. In Mr. Pope nothing is so original as his Rape of The Lock, nor discovers so much invention. In this kind of mock-heroic, he is without a rival in our language, for Dryden has written nothing of the kind.[2]

Oliver Goldsmith in his The Beauties of English Poetry (1767), observes that The Rape of The Lock

> ...seems to be Mr. Pope's most finished production, and is perhaps the most perfect in our language... and it is probable, if our country were called upon to shew a specimen of their genius to foreigners, this would be the work here fixed upon.[3]

Samuel Johnson says it is

> ...the most airy, the most ingenius, and the most delightful of all (Pope's) compositions.[4]

He then continues with a summary of the critical comment up to and including his own time:

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[1]To Mr. Pope, 1717, quoted in The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors, ed. Charles Wells Moulton (Buffalo, The Moulton Publishing Company, 1902), III, 160.

[2]Lives of the Poets, V, 249, quoted in Moulton, op. cit., III, 161.

[3]The Works of Oliver Goldsmith (N.Y., Harper & Bros., 1881), III, 488.

[4]Samuel Johnson, Lives of The Poets (London, Bell & Sons, 1900), III, 178.

> To the praises which have been accumulated on the Rape of The Lock by readers of every class, from the critick to the waiting-maid, it is difficult to make any addition.[1]

Since Johnson wrote these lines in 1779, praises have continued to accumulate. To quote them all would be monotonous. However, William Hazlitt's opinion, representative of the romantic, is worth noting. He says that the poem

> ...is the most excellent specimen of 'filigree' work ever invented. It is admirable in proportion as it is made of nothing...It is made of gauze and silver spangles. The most glittering appearance is given to everything, to paste, pomatum, billets-doux, and patches. Airs, languid airs, breathe around; the atmosphere is perfumed with affectation. A toilet is described with the solemnity of an altar raised to the goddess of vanity, and the history of a silver bodkin is given with all the pomp of heraldry. No pains are spared, no profusion of ornament, no splendour of poetic diction, to set off the meanest things. The balance between the concealed irony and the assumed gravity is as nicely trimmed as the balance of power in Europe. The little is made great and the great little. You hardly know whether to laugh or weep. It is the triumph of insignificance, the apotheosis of foppery and folly. It is the perfection of the mock-heroic.[2]

Leslie Stephen, whose praises of the first edition we have already noted, observes in the same commentary that

> ...critics have agreed that (Pope) never showed more skill than in the remodelling of this poem; and it has ever since held a kind of recognized supremacy amongst the productions of the drawing-room muse.[3]

Reuben Post Halleck, speaking in the early part of the

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[1]Samuel Johnson, Lives of The Poets (London, Bell & Sons, 1900), III, 178.

[2]William Hazlitt, Lectures on The English Poets, Lecture iv, 1818, quoted from Moulton, op. cit., III, 161.

[3]Op. cit., p. 40.

twentieth century, refers to the poem as Pope's masterpiece[1]; and George Sherburn, the author of the latest critical life of Pope, says:

> (Pope's) genius enabled him, with mock-heroic as a vehicle, to make sophisticated society seem as ludicrous as any romantic could think it and at the same time as likeable as any fop could wish it.[2]

In his Name and Nature of Poetry (1933), A. E. Housman says that

> ...perhaps no English poem of greater than lyric length, not even The Nonne's Priest's Tale or The Ancient Mariner, is quite so perfect as the Rape of The Lock.[3]

The reader has no doubt observed in the foregoing discussion that the critical opinion, so favorable to the poem during the last two centuries, is generally concerned with its technical perfection. Yet other distinguishing features are apparent. We are told at least that the poem is a perfect example of the mock-heroic, that it is a marvel of invention, and that it is a delightful satire on the social life of the author's own time.

Since these generalizations are the accumulated opinions of different authors of different periods, they are naturally somewhat haphazard. Nevertheless they at once suggested the essentials upon which a critical examination of the poem may be based: form and substance. I shall pro-

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[1] History of English Literature, 1900, p. 255, quoted in Moulton, op. cit., III, 163.

[2] George Sherburn, op. cit., p. 399.

[3] Alfred E. Housman, The Name and Nature of Poetry (New York, Macmillan Company, 1933), p. 15.

ceed to consider them in this order, limiting my exposition of form to what seems to me a significant aspect not specifically recognized by previous commentators.

I

Mr. Courthope tells us in his discussion of The Rape of The Lock that

> Pope has succeeded in enbalming a fleeting episode of fashionable manners in a form which can perish only with the English language.[1]

To the reader familiar with the structure of the poem this statement is of course significant. The narrative is made up of a series of episodes so closely knit together that we are at once impressed with it as a consummate work of art. So compact is the whole that, in its division into five cantos, the poem is justly comparable to the typical five-act play. In the dramatic progression there is an obvious similarity:

(1) The first canto, aside from introducing the main character, foreshadows through Belinda's dream the dramatic conflict. (2) The rising action begins in Canto II with the meeting of Lord Petre and Belinda aboard the barge. Here Lord Petre plots to steal the lock, and Ariel's alarm further foreshadows the conflict. (3) The voyage up the Thames in the third canto brings the protagonists closer together in the game of ombre. The game of ombre heightens and accelerates the action, while the sylphs' deep concern for Belinda's safety induces tragic anticipation. The coffee-drinking opens the way for the climax, or theft, which comes at the end of the canto and is, by the way, an excellent ex-

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[1] Courthope, op. cit., p. 99.

ample of Pope's superb skill in handling a dramatic incident.

> But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
> How soon they find fit instruments of ill!
> Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
> A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
> So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,
> Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
> He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends
> The little engine on his fingers' ends;
> This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
> As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.
> Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprites repair,
> A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
> And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;
> Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.
> Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought
> The close recesses of the Virgin's thought;
> As on the nosegay in her breast reclined,
> He watched th'Ideas rising in her mind,
> Sudden he viewed, in spite of all her art,
> An earthly Lover lurking at her heart
> Amazed, confused, he found his power expired,
> Resigned to fate, and with a sigh retired.
> The Peer now spreads the glitt'ring Forfex wide,
> T'inclose the Lock; now joins it, to divide.
> Even then, before the fatal engine closed,
> A wretched Sylph too fondly interposed;
> Fate urged the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain,
> (But airy substance soon unites again)
> The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
> From the fair head, for ever, and for ever![1]

(4) The falling action begins, in the fourth canto, with the confusion that follows the theft of the lock. Here the stage is set for the conflict that determines the outcome. (5) The war that follows in the fifth canto completes the falling action, bringing about the catastrophe, or disappearance of the lock. A thirty-eight-line epilogue marks the conclusion.

The poem also adheres to the unities of time, place, and action. The reader is informed in the first part of the

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[1] Rape of The Lock, III, 125-154.

poem that the action will be limited to a single day. This becomes apparent when Ariel tells Belinda in her dream that some sort of calamity is in store for her "...Ere to the main this morning sun descend."[1] Immediately after this Belinda awakes and prepares for the voyage up the Thames to Hampton Court,[2] where she arrives in the late afternoon.[3] It is there at the social gathering that her lock is stolen[4] and the denouement occurs.[5] Quite obviously the poem conforms to the unity of place. The action is restricted to one locality, the environs of London. The unity of action is preserved throughout the poem as the following summary of the succession of events will show. Belinda spends a long period at her toilet enhancing her beauty in preparation for the voyage up the Thames.[6] The result captures the heart of Lord Petre when he goes aboard the barge, and thus intensifies the young man's determination to possess himself of the lock.[7] The sylphs, sensing Lord Petre's design, foreshadow the conflict and induce tragic anticipation through their sudden alarm and concern for Belinda's safety.[8] The

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[1]Sherburn, op. cit., The Rape of The Lock, Canto I, 110.

[2]Ibid., Canto I, 121-148.

[3]Ibid., Canto III, 19-24.

[4]Ibid., Canto III, 147-154.

[5]Ibid., Canto V, 103-112.

[6]Ibid., Canto I, 121-148.

[7]Ibid., Canto II, 29-34.

[8]Ibid., Canto II, 53-136.

voyage up the Thames brings the protagonists together, and the game of ombre marks the beginning of the conflict.[1] The sylphs intensify the tragic anticipation by their extra precaution for the safety of Belinda.[2] The coffee-drinking opens the way for the theft, the coffee stimulates Lord Petre's courage to perpetrate it, and Clarissa provides the means at the psychological moment.[3] The ideas that arise in Belinda's mind banish her sylphs.[4] She is thus left unprotected, and the baron takes her curl.[5] The retreat of the sylphs leaves the field to the gnome, who throws the action into confusion and discordant passions.[6] Clarissa, sensing the impending conflict, momentarily calms the tumult with her plea for peace;[7] but her good counsel is drowned in an uproarious demand for war.[8] The war that follows grows out of the discord provoked by the baron's assault, and the disappearance of the lock is the result of the confusion of the battle.[9] The epilogue referred to elsewhere completes the unity.

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[1] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto III, 29-100.

[2] Ibid., Canto III, 31-36.

[3] Ibid., Canto III, 105-154.

[4] Ibid., Canto III, 142-146.

[5] Ibid., Canto III, 139-154.

[6] Ibid., Canto IV, 9-176.

[7] Ibid., Canto V, 9-34.

[8] Ibid., Canto V, 35-44.

[9] Ibid., Canto V, 96-112.

II

The common assertion of the earliest commentators, and repeated by their successors, that The Rape of The Lock is a good example of the mock-heroic and excellent social satire points clearly to the main burden or burdens of the poem. One is tempted to prefer the singular by the fact that the poet's subjects are treated in the same light vein of mockery. For the purpose of exposition, however, it will be convenient to discuss separately the poem as a mock-epic and as a satire on society.

William Hazlitt's statement that The Rape of The Lock is a good example of the mock-epic[1] implies that it belongs to a distinct genre. It is in the tradition of the pseudo-Homeric "Battle of the Frogs and Mice", "The Game of Chess" by Vida, Boileau's "Le Lutrin", Addison's Latin poem on the wars of the pygmies and the cranes, and Garth's "Dispensary".[2] With the translation of Boileau's "Le Lutrin" in 1682, the mock epic became a popular vehicle of satire in England, and continued so into the last quarter of the eighteenth century.[3]

The criteria of the mock-epic have been worked out by

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[1] Op. cit., III, 161.

[2] Sherburn, op. cit., pp. 398-99.

[3] A. F. B. Clark, Boileau and The French Classical Critics in England (1660-1830), Librarie Ancienne, Edouard Champion (Paris, 1925), pp. 334-35.

Mr. Courthope in his Life of Pope.[1] The main distinctions are: (1) A trivial action is presented in a grand manner, and thus necessarily involves parody and elevated diction. (2) A certain moral sentiment (here the social satire) is diffused in order to justify the elaborate expenditure of art on a trivial subject. Otherwise it conforms rather closely to the conventional requirements of the epic.

To the reader familiar with the epic the mockery in The Rape of The Lock is of course immediately apparent. As in the epics of Homer, Virgil, and Milton, the theme is stated in the opening lines:

> What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
> What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
> I sing - [2]

The usual appeal to the muses (in this case to the goddess) then follows:

> Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel
> A well-bred Lord t'assault a gentle Belle?
> O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,
> Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord? [3]

The narrative immediately proceeds. Belinda, the central character, is presented, and something of the situation announced:

> Sol through white curtains shot a tim'rous ray,
> And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day:
> Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,
> And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:
> Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,
> And the pressed watched returned the silver sound.

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[1] Courthope, op. cit., pp. 97-8.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 1-3.

[3] Ibid., Canto I, 7-10.

Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,
Her guardian SYLPH prolonged the balmy rest:
'Twas He had summoned to her silent bed
The morning-dream that hovered o'er her head...[1]

The narrative is simple, direct, dignified, and colorfully descriptive. The action is frequently interspersed with lofty speeches which one cannot avoid associating with the stately oratory of the epic heroes. Ariel's prophetic speech in the cordage of the barge,[2] Lord Petre's oration celebrating the success of his venture,[3] and Belinda's lamentations over the loss of her lock[4] are especially good examples. For instance note the opening lines of Belinda's speech:

"For ever cursed be this detested day,
Which snatched my best, my fav'rite curl away!
Happy! ah ten times happy had I been,
If Hampton-Court these eyes had never seen!
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid,
By the love of Courts to numerous ills betrayed?[5]

The various episodes of the poem associate themselves in the reader's mind with incidents in the great epics. When the gilded youth, appearing in Belinda's dream, inflames her ruling passions with whispered flattery,[6] one cannot help recalling another gilded gentleman, in the guise of a

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[1] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 13-22.

[2] Ibid., Canto II, 73-115.

[3] Ibid., Canto III, 161-182.

[4] Ibid., Canto IV, 148-176.

[5] Ibid., Canto IV, 148-153.

[6] Ibid., Canto I, 27-46.

toad, whispering in the ear of Eve.[1] The game of ombre is a paste-board epic war in which a glittering goddess gives victory to a hard-pressed king.[2] When the gnome descends to the Cave of Spleen, we think of Virgil's heroes in the underworld, or of the hissing serpents in Milton's hell.[3] The bloodless war that follows the theft of the lock is no less furious than that provoked by the theft of the Spartan queen.[4]

The sylphs of course parallel the supernatural beings of the heroic epics. Yet, while they imitate those functions seriously attributed to the angels and heathen gods in epic poetry, they are not indispensable to the author's purpose, as we shall see later.

In addition to the imitative features referred to here, many parodies of well-known classics appear throughout the poem. This fact has been previously recognized by other commentators. Some of these parodies mimic their sources so closely that they are here reproduced. The following passages are obvious parodies of Dryden's translation of Virgil's AEneid.[5] The sources are given in the column to the left of the parodies for the convenience of the reader, who, it is assumed, will likely prefer this order of arrangement.

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[1] Milton, Paradise Lost, ed. James H. Hanford (N.Y., Thos. Nelson & Sons, 1936), Book IV, 797-90.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto III, 95-100.

[3] Ibid., Canto IV, 17-78.

[4] Ibid., Canto V, 37-112.

[5] Dryden's Poetical Works, ed. George R. Noyes (Chicago, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909).

Sources	Parodies
The love of horses which they had, alive, And care of chariots, after death survive.[1]	Her joy in gilded Chariots, when alive, And love of Ombre, after death survive.[2]
Apollo, heard, and, granting half his pray'r, Shuffled in winds the rest, and toss'd in empty air.[3]	The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer, The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.[4]
Just in the gate and in the jaws of hell, Revengeful Cares and sullen Sorrows dwell.[5]	She sees, and trembles at th'approaching ill, Just in the jaws of ruin, and Codille.[6]
Then thrice around his neck his arms he threw; And thrice the flitting shadow slipp'd away.[7]	And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear; Thrice she looked back, and thrice the foe drew near.[8]
While rolling rivers into seas shall run, And round the space of heav'n the radiant sun; While trees the mountain tops with shades supply, Your honor, name, and praise shall never die.[9]	While visits shall be paid on solemn days, When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze, While nymphs take treats, or assignations give, So long my honour, name, and praise shall live.[10]

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[1] AEneis, op. cit., VI, 899-90.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 55-6.

[3] AEneis, op. cit., XI, 1165-66.

[4] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto II, 45-46.

[5] AEneis, op. cit., VI, 384-385.

[6] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto III, 91-92.

[7] AEneis, op. cit., VI, 950-951.

[8] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto III, 137-138.

[9] AEneis, op. cit., I, 854-857.

[10] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto III, 167-170.

Sources	Parodies
O mortals, blind in fate, who never know To bear high fortune, or endure the low! The time shall come, when Turnus, but in vain, Shall wish untouch'd the trophies of the slain; Shall wish the fatal belt were far away, And curse the dire remembrance of the day.[1]	Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate, Too soon dejected, and too soon elate. Sudden, these honours shall be snatched away, And cursed forever this victorious day.[2]

One from Virgil's Georgics, also from Dryden's translation:

Slight is the subject, but the praise not small, If Heav'n assist, and Phoebus hear my call.[3]	Slight is the subject, but not so the praise, If She inspire, and He approve my lays.[4]

The following parodies from the author's own translation of Homer's Iliad[5] are both interesting and significant. It will be recalled that Pope was working on his translation of Homer at the same time he was recasting the Rape of The Lock.[6]

Sources	Parodies
All but the king; with various thoughts oppress'd,	All but the Sylph - with careful thoughts oprest,

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[1] AEneis, op. cit., X, 699-705.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto III, 101-104.

[3] Virgil, Georgics, (Dryden, op. cit.,) IV, 8-9

[4] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 5-6.

[5] Alexander Pope, Homer's Iliad and The Odyssey, ed. W. C. Armstrong, (Hartford, Silas Andrus Son, 1853), pp. 21-541.

[6] Sherburn, op. cit., pp. 458-60.

Sources	Parodies
His country's cares lay rolling in his breast.[1]	Th'impending woe sat heavy on his breast.[2]
The sire of gods his golden scales suspends With equal hand: in these explored the fate Of Greece and Troy, and poised the mighty weight. Press'd with its load, the Grecian balance lies Low sunk on earth, the Trojan strikes the skies.[3]	Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air, Weighs the Men's wits against the Lady's hair; The doubtful beam long nods from side to side; At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.[4]
Now by this sacred sceptre hear me swear, Which never more shall leaves or blossoms bear -- Which, sever'd from the trunk, as I from thee, On the bare mountains left its parent tree.[5]	But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear, (Which never more shall join its parted hair; Which never more its honours shall renew, Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew)...[6]
High in his hand the golden sceptre blazed, By Vulcan formed, from Jove to Hermes came; To Pelops he t'immortal gift resigned: Th'immortal gift great Pelops left behind In Atreus' hand which not with Atreus ends; To rich Thyestes next the prize descends;	Now meet thy fate, incensed Belinda cried, And drew a deadly bodkin from her side. (The same, his ancient personage to deck, Her great great grandsire wore about his neck, In three seal-rings; which after, melted down, Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown:

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[1] Iliad., op. cit., X, 3-4.

[2] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto II, 53-54.

[3] Iliad, op. cit., VIII, 88-92.

[4] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto V, 71-74.

[5] Iliad, op. cit., I, 309-12.

[6] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto IV, 133-36.

Sources	Parodies
And now the mark of Agamemnon's reign Subjects all Argos and controls the main.[1]	Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew, The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew; Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs, Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.[2]

Clarissa's speech is remarkably like that of Sarpedon to Glaucus in the twelfth book of the Iliad.

"Why boast we, Glaucus, our extended reign, Where Zanthus' streams enrich the Lycian plain; Our numerous herds, that range the fruitful field; And hills where vines their purple harvest yield; Our foaming bowls, with purer nectar crown'd; Our feasts, enhanced with music's sprightly sound; Why on those shores are we with joy survey'd, Admired as heroes, and as gods obey'd, Unless great acts superior merit prove, And vindicate the bounteous powers above? 'Tis ours, the dignity they give to grace; The first in valor, as the first in place: That when with wondering eyes our martial bands Behold our deeds transcending our commands, 'Such', they may cry, 'deserve the sovereign state, Whom those that envy, dare not imitate!' Could all our care elude the gloomy grave, Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,	"Say why are Beauties praised and honoured most, The wise man's passion, and the vain man's toast? Why decked with all that land and sea afford, Why Angels called, and Angel-like adored? Why round our coaches crowd the white-gloved Beaux, Why bows the side-box from its inmost rows; How vain are all these glories, all our pains, Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains: That men may say, when we the front-box grace: 'Behold the first in virtue as in face!' Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day, Charmed the small-pox, or chased old-age away; Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce, Or who would learn one earthly thing of use? To patch, nay ogle, might become a Saint, Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint.

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[1] Iliad, op. cit., II, 128-136.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto V, 87-96.

Sources

For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war:
But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
The life which others pay, let us bestow,
And give to fame what we to nature owe;
Brave though we fall and honour'd if we live,
Or let us glory gain, or glory give!"[1]

Parodies

But since, alas! frail beauty must decay,
Curled or uncurled, since locks will turn to grey;
Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,
And she who scorns a man, must die a maid;
What then remains but well our power to use,
And keep good-humour still whate'er we lose?
And trust me, dear! good-humour can prevail,
When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.
Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll;
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul."[2]

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[1] Iliad, XII, 371-396.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto V, 9-34.

III

It is through this type of verse that Pope ridicules a slight incident in the social life of his own day. The incident itself and the persons connected with it are made to appear ridiculous in the affected loftiness of the narrative. Pope sustains a disparate exaltation of the feminine frivolity and masculine stupidity throughout the entire poem. This is achieved through a skilful adaptation of the parodies, a subtle management of the sylphs, and various combinations of concealed irony and assumed gravity.

The reader is first aware of parody in the opening passage immediately after the theme is announced:

> Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
> If She inspire, and He approve my lays.[1]

If we compare these lines with those they imitate, two facts become apparent. First, the incident of the stolen lock is being disparately exalted in the heroic manner of Virgil; and, second, She and He are treated in a like manner through their implied similarity to Heaven and Phoebus:

> Slight is the subject, but the praise not small,
> If Heaven assist, Phoebus hear my call.[2]

Ariel tells Belinda in her dream that woman's vanity does not die with her mortal body, but

> Her joy in gilded Chariots, when alive,
> And love of Ombre, after death survive.[3]

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[1] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 5-6.

[2] Georgics, op. cit., IV, 8-9.

[3] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 55-56.

These frivolous interests of the feminine mind are emphasized by an implied comparison with those of Virgil's heroes in the underworld:

> The love of horses which they had alive
> And care of chariots after death survive.[1]

Belinda, knowing the stupidity of the male, has cultivated two shiny curls with which to ensnare him. Being a coquette, and wise in the ways of her craft, she knows:

> Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare,
> And beauty draws (him) with a single hair.[2]

But this power of feminine wiles over the male is not an original discovery with Belinda; it is a legacy handed down to her from the females of antiquity:

> She knows her man and when you rant and swear,
> Can draw you to her with a single hair.[3]

The baron, becoming dazzled by the enchanting locks, swears to possess himself of them. To this end he erects an altar to love, upon which he builds a pyre of all the trophies of his former amorous conquests. Setting fire to this sacrificial offering, he prostrates himself before it and implores the powers to grant that he "soon obtain and long possess the prize." And then:

> The powers gave ear, and granted half his prayer,
> The rest, the winds dispersed in empty air.[4]

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[1] AEneis, op. cit., VI, 899-90.

[2] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., II, 27-28.

[3] Persius, Dryden, op. cit., V, 247-48.

[4] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto II, 45-46.

The hero in Virgil's AEneid likewise prays for the power to vanquish a woman, and gets exactly the same results:

> Apollo heard, and, granting half his pray'r,
> Shuffled in winds the rest and tossed in empty air.[1]

Having possessed himself of the long-coveted curl, the baron swears never to part with it:

> "But by this Lock, this sacred Lock I swear,
> (Which never more shall join its parted hair;
> Which never more its honours shall renew,
> Clipped from the lovely head where late it grew)
> That while my nostrils draw the vital air,
> This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear."[2]

Our sense of the ridiculous is naturally heightened when we recognize the baron's oath as a parody on that of Achilles:

> Now by this sacred scepter hear me swear
> Which never more shall leaves or blossoms bear,
> Which severed from the trunk (as I from thee)
> On the bare mountains left its parent tree.[3]

Man's stupidity is suggested by the implication that his wit is no match against the charm of a lock of hair:[4]

> Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air,
> Weighs the Men's wits against the Lady's hair;
> The doubtful beam long nods from side to side;
> At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.[5]

The jest is stated as solemnly as if the author were rendering an account of the gods' deciding the fate of the Greeks and Trojans:

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[1] AEneis, op. cit., XI, 794-95.

[2] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto IV, 133-38.

[3] Iliad, op. cit., I, 309-12.

[4] The more obvious implication is that man is witless.

[5] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., V, 71-4.

> The sire of gods his golden scales suspends
> With equal hand: in these explored the fate
> Of Greece and Troy, and poised the mighty weight:
> Press'd with its load, the Grecian balance lies
> Low sunk on earth, the Trojan strikes the skies.[1]

The pedigree of Belinda's bodkin is given with a veiled jibe at the vanity of her ancestors:

> Now meet thy fate, incensed Belinda cried,
> And drew a deadly bodkin from her side.
> (The same, his ancient personage to deck,
> Her great great grandsire wore about his neck,
> In three seal-rings; which after, melted down,
> Formed a vast buckle for his widow's gown:
> Her infant grandame's whistle next it grew,
> The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew;
> Then in a bodkin graced her mother's hairs,
> Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)[2]

The concealed irony lies in the satirical implication that the bodkin is as important as the sceptre of Agamemnon:

> High in his hand the golden sceptre blazed,
> By Vulcan formed, from Jove to Hermes came;
> To Pelops he th' immortal gift resigned:
> Th' immortal gift great Pelops left behind
> In Atreus' hand which not with Atreus ends;
> To rich Thyestes next the prize descends;
> And now the mark of Agamemnon's reign
> Subjects all Argos and controls the main.[3]

The sylphs play an even more important part. I think we might well agree with Mr. Parnell when he says

> ...the new machines, in names of ridicule,
> Mock the grave phrenzy of the chemic fool:
> But know, ye fair, a point concealed with art,
> The sylphs and gnomes are but a woman's heart.[4]

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[1] Iliad, VIII, 88-92.

[2] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto V, 87-95.

[3] Iliad, II, 128-136.

[4] Moulton, op. cit., III, 160.

The sylphs personify the frivolous thoughts, conduct, and interests peculiar to the coquette.[1] Ariel, Belinda's chief sylph, represents her vanity; and hence is the source and guiding spirit of all the other airy creatures that guard her against the encroachment of sober thought and serious purpose.

Ariel directs her thoughts and dreams. The gilded youth who visits her in the bed-room vision we know to be Ariel transformed.[2] Therefore we are not surprised at what the vision reveals. The sylph tells her that she is the fairest of all mortals and that she should know her own importance.[3] He supplants the orthodox conception of the soul's disposition after death with his own doctrine of the immortality of female vanity.[4] The ruling passions of the female live beyond the grave in their original elements, the nature of these elements depending on the nature of those passions dominating the individual female in life. The fiery termagant, for example, becomes a salamander, the implication being that it is the only creature that her flaming temper cannot burn. Those who are soft in mind and yielding in character pass quietly away, only to reappear later as tea-drinking nymphs. The graver prude remains on earth in the character of a gnome, where she continues to indulge her

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[1] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 51-114.

[2] Ibid., Canto I, 105-106.

[3] Ibid., Canto I, 35-46.

[4] Ibid., Canto I, 47-66.

passions for mischief. The light coquette, however, returns to the air, where she sports and flutters as an invisible sylph. Later she attaches herself to some young lady, who by virtue of this attachment is thereafter safe from the contaminating influences of man. In other words, the implication is that she who is under the protection of a sylph is so airy that she is intangible; and hence when she is exposed to the temptations that confront her in her pursuit of pleasure, it is her sylph that saves her.[1]

Some nymphs, however, being too conscious of their beauty because of the flattery of marriage proposals, sooner or later succumb to the power of the gnomes, or their suppressed emotions:

> Some Nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,
> For life predestined to the Gnome's embrace.
> These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,
> When offers are disdained, and love denied:
> When gay Ideas crowd their vacant brain,
> While Peers, and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,
> And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,
> And in soft sounds, Your Grace salutes their ear.
> 'Tis these that early taint the female soul,
> Instruct the eyes of young Coquettes to roll,
> Teach Infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,
> And little hearts to flutter at a Beau.[2]

We recognize these lines to be a subtle characterization of Belinda herself, as well as a veiled warning against her own dangerous pursuits. Later, it will be recalled, gay ideas did arise in her mind; her little heart did flutter at a beau; and as a consequence, she sank to the embraces of an

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[1] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 68-78.

[2] Ibid., Canto I, 79-90.

ugly gnome.[1]

But if a woman is to remain free from the power of the gnomes, and thus continue the fickle life of a coquette, she has but to follow her sylph:

> Oft, when the world imagine women stray,
> The Sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,
> Through all the giddy circle they pursue,
> And old impertinence expel the new.[2]

It is likewise her sylph that invests her with the faculty of inconstancy, which not only renders her heart invulnerable to the designs of men but sets them at odds among themselves:

> What tender maid but must a victim fall
> To one man's treat, but for another's ball?
> When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,
> If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?
> With varying vanities, from every part,
> They shift the moving Toyshop of the heart;
> Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,
> Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.
> This erring mortals Levity may call;
> Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.[3]

But in spite of his powers, Ariel has a premonition that danger is in store for Belinda, and he is not altogether certain of himself. His powers of intuition are not strong enough to determine the nature of the impending evil; but we suspect that he senses it when he tells Belinda to beware of man above all things. At any rate his fears of man are justified when Belinda awakens and banishes him from her

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[1] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto IV, 89-94.

[2] Ibid., Canto I, 91-94.

[3] Ibid., Canto I, 95-104.

mind in the interest of the flattery of a billet-doux:

> 'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,
> Thy eyes first opened on a Billet-doux;
> Wounds, Charmes, and Ardors were no sooner read,
> But all the Vision vanished from thy head.[1]

The billet-doux, in spite of Ariel's warning,[2] makes her conscious of her face; and as she goes before her dressing table, there is the suggestion that she is also subject to certain emotions:

> Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;
> The fair each moment rises in her charms,
> Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
> And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
> Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
> And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.[3]

Heretofore she has been under the protection of only one sylph; but, because of this apparent faltering, she has need of more. Therefore, in the toilet scene where she is preparing for the reception at Hampton Court, she becomes the profound concern of a number of them:

> The busy Sylphs surround their darling care,
> These set the head, and those divide the hair,
> Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
> And Betty's praised for labours not her own.[4]

But when Belinda meets Lord Petre aboard the barge, Ariel is so apprehensive of danger that he summons all the sylphs at his command to protect her.[5] He gives minute attention to

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[1] _Rape of The Lock_, Canto I, 117-120.

[2] _Ibid._, Canto I, 79-90 (See foreshadowing of Belinda's fate).

[3] _Ibid._, Canto I, 139-144.

[4] _Ibid._, Canto I, 145-48.

[5] _Ibid._, Canto II, 75-135.

every little charm that Belinda has, and he places a trusty guard over each, and in the order of their importance:

> Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair:
> The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care;
> The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
> And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;
> Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock;
> Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.[1]

Belinda's airy escort conducts her safely up the Thames to Hampton Court, where, with the aid of an additional number of sylphs to watch her cards, she vanquishes Lord Petre in a game of ombre. Of course the airy creatures are merely the airs of a coquette which dazzle and overwhelm the enamoured young lord. However, the billet-doux, the voyage up the Thames, and the game of ombre have all had their part in causing her little heart to flutter at last; and when during the coffee-drinking scene those gay Ideas arise in her vacant mind and banish the faithful sylphs, we know she has forgotten Ariel's warning lecture. And when Lord Petre, recognizing this advantage, takes her curl, we know that she has at last fallen victim to the gnome.[2]

Aside from the use of the sylphs in showing Belinda as a coquette, who, against the dictates of her own vanity, falls victim to a man, it is through the speech of Ariel that Pope scores the feminine mind and character with many of his pleasantries. For example, Ariel implies that young women, having the mentality of children, give credit to that which

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[1] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto II, 111-116.

[2] Ibid., Canto III, 131-154.

wisdom would reject:

> Some secret truths, from learnèd pride concealed,
> To Maids alone and Children are revealed:
> What though no credit doubting Wits may give?
> The Fair and Innocent shall still believe.[1]

Her brain is vacant, but the glitter of social sham and masculine pomp can raise gay Ideas in it:

> Then gay Ideas crown the vacant brain,
> While Peers, and Dukes, and all the sweeping train,
> And Garters, Stars, and Coronets appear,
> And in soft sounds, Your Grace salutes their ear.[2]

Belinda's dearest possession is Shock, her lap-dog. This is implied when Ariel, in assigning his airy guards to their several stations, trusts the lap-dog only to himself:

> ...Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite Lock;
> Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.[3]

Pope must have had Addison's Spectator in mind when he directed this light and innocent banter at the voluminous petticoats of the day:

> To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note,
> We trust th'important charge, the petticoat;
> Oft have we known that seven-fold fence to fail,
> Though stiff with hoops, and armed with ribs of whale;
> Form a strong line about the silver bound,
> And guard the wide circumference around.[4]

The vanity and hypocrisy of Queen Anne's court come in for a sly thrust when Ariel informs his army that the chief of all the airy kind guards the British throne:

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[1] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 37-40.

[2] Ibid., Canto I, 83-86.

[3] Ibid., Canto II, 115-116.

[4] Ibid., Canto II, 117-122.

> Of these the chief the care of Nations own,
> And guard with Arms divine the British Throne.[1]

Furthermore, the conventions of sophisticated society are brought in for a bit of ridicule, as well as the women who observe and insist on these conventions. In the game of ombre each card in Belinda's hand is closely guarded by a sylph; but the sylphs are very particular with respect to social precedence:

> First Ariel perched upon a Matadore,
> Then each, according to the rank they bore;
> For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race,
> Are, as when women, wondrous fond of place.[2]

The frivolous and airy nature of feminine interests is implied in Ariel's speech to his fellow sylphs:

> Our humbler province is to tend the Fair,
> Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;
> To save the powder from too rude a gale,
> Nor let th'imprisoned essences exhale;
> To draw fresh colours from the vernal flowers;
> To steal from rainbows e'er they drop their showers
> A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
> Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
> Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow,
> To change a Flounce, or add a Furbelow.[3]

I have said elsewhere that Pope produces some of his satirical effect through the use of various combinations of concealed irony and assumed gravity. Of course, the mock-heroic itself partakes of that nature since it treats a trivial theme in an elevated style; likewise the parodies, as I have pointed out. But Pope does not restrict this ap-

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[1] Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto II, 89-90.

[2] Ibid., Canto III, 33-36.

[3] Ibid., Canto II, 91-100.

proach to imitation and parody alone.

For example, when Belinda goes before her toilet with all the solemnity and piety of a nun approaching the shrine of the Virgin, we know it is not the Virgin who provokes her adoration:

> And now, unveiled, the Toilet stands displayed,
> Each silver Vase in mystic order laid.
> First, robed in white, the Nymph intent adores,
> With head uncovered, the Cosmetic powers.[1]

Nor is it anything outside of herself that stirs her soul:

> A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
> To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
> Th 'inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,
> Trembling begins the sacred rites of Pride.[2]

And when this sacred ritual is under way, we have a feeling that to her this must be far more important than the rites of divine worship:

> Now awful Beauty puts on all its arms;
> The fair each moment rises in her charms,
> Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
> And calls forth all the wonders of her face.[3]

Ariel affects the gravity of a prophet when he predicts an unknown calamity that awaits Belinda; but when he places equal emphasis on the several possibilities of what this calamity is apt to be, he betrays a ridiculous sense of values:

> Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail China jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour or her new brocade;
> Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;

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[1] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto I, 121-124.

[2] Ibid., Canto I, 125-128.

[3] Ibid., Canto I, 139-142.

Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball;
Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall.[1]

A like manner of treatment subjects the British statesmen and Queen Anne to a similar thrust of ridicule in the description of Hampton Court:

Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom
Of foreign Tyrants and of Nymphs at home;
Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take - and sometimes Tea.[2]

In something like an epilogue to a play Pope brings his mock-heroic "apotheosis of foppery and folly" to an end by appropriately appealing to Belinda's vanity. And, from what we know of the young lady, this little streak of "forked lightning" probably had the desired effect.

Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
Shall draw such envy as the Lock you lost.
For, after all the murders of your eye,
When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:
When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
This Lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.[3]

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[1] The Rape of The Lock, op. cit., Canto II, 105-110.

[2] Ibid., Canto III, 5-8.

[3] Ibid., Canto V, 141-150.

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